

from a one-size-fits-all approach with Washington mandates, with unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats forcing more regulations on hospitals, on doctors, on nurses, and on nursing homes across the board. That is why the American people say the health care law is going to make things even worse.

It is very distressing to hear a Democratic Senator come to the floor and say “Isn’t ObamaCare great?” because the American people know it is not. They know they have been hurt, they have been harmed, they have been taxed, they have been penalized, and they have been forced to pay more. They have lost options, lost choices, and lost opportunities because of this law and this administration and the way this was passed—without listening to people from both sides.

I think it is time for the Democrats to stop trying to spin this destructive law. It is time for them to work with Republicans to give the American people what they wanted from the beginning. They wanted the care they need from a doctor they chose at lower costs, not a health care law that so many Americans believe is going to continue to make health care in this country worse.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Susan S. Gibson, of Virginia, to be Inspector General of the National Reconnaissance Office.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 15 minutes for debate, equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from New Jersey.

#### RUSSIA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to take a stand against Russia’s attempts to tamper with the American Presidential electoral process and to create chaos in our elections and, at the end of the day, to undermine the integrity of the results of our election to serve its own purposes.

I remind my colleagues that in 2012, I was the victim of such election tampering attempts. The Washington Post reported that while I was running for reelection and preparing to become

chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the CIA had credible evidence, including Internet protocol addresses, linking Cuban agents to planted stories in the United States and in Latin American publications.

It was reported that those connections were laid out in intelligence reports provided to U.S. Government officials and sent by secure cables to the FBI’s Counterintelligence Division. Despite all of our government’s capabilities, they supposedly could not find who was behind the smear. Maybe our government didn’t want to rock the boat as they were prepared to establish relations with Cuba, but you would think that our government would do everything possible against a foreign government that was trying to upset the election of a sitting Senator to affect U.S. policy.

Let’s be clear. In this new digital world of open and accessible personal information available to anyone who has the technical savvy to find it and use it for nefarious purposes, the election of anyone in this Chamber is at risk.

We need to take a stand in this election cycle. We need the administration to come forward and tell us what they know about Vladimir Putin’s efforts to influence our Presidential election. We need to know what Putin knows, and we must find out exactly who is behind it, what they have, and what their purpose is.

It is certainly more than my experience and more than the Republican nominee’s deplorable admiration for dictators and strongmen. It is about protecting the American political process from outside interference and influence.

Let’s be very clear. I know, from my experience that we cannot underestimate the tradecraft of seasoned operatives like Vladimir Putin. We certainly cannot be naive enough to praise them for perceived strength and conflate it with the ruthless abuse of power. There is a difference between thuggery and strength.

Let’s be clear. Neither the Cuban Government, which attempted to smear me, nor Putin is in any way a friend of the United States. In Putin’s case, he is, as my colleague from Arizona—who, like me, was sanctioned by Putin—has publicly called him, “a thug and a butcher.” He is, in fact, a dictator who has been connected to the brutal deaths of his enemies and now has shown a willingness to use cyber warfare to undermine our democratic process. He clearly is attempting to shake the bedrock integrity of our political system, as Cuban intelligence tried to undermine the integrity of my last election in an effort to prevent me from becoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

From my perspective, the purpose is not only to undermine credibility and faith but to create a result that would benefit Russia. These actions are beyond the scope of any acceptable inter-

national norm and cannot be tolerated. With a laptop, a computer code, and a KGB penchant to rebuild the Russian Empire, wage Cold War 2.0, and use every technological tool to tip the geopolitical balance in Russia’s favor, we cannot in any way praise Putin or anyone else who attempts to influence our election process for their leadership.

We have seen the manifestation of Putin’s methods in the latest cyber attack on the Democratic National Committee and in a long list of egregious conventional interventions, from the annexation of Crimea to the orchestrating of supposed-Russian separatists who shot down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine, his invasion of eastern Ukraine through the use of irregular Russian forces, now his troops amassing along the Ukraine border, and his invasion of Georgia not long ago. You can see it in his efforts to undermine sovereign Baltic countries through broadcasting and cyber efforts against those governments.

We have seen it in his military and political maneuverings to maintain control of his naval base in the port city of Tartus in Syria by intervening, with Assad, in the Syrian civil war. In Syria, Putin has stepped up his support for his friend and dictator Bashar al-Assad.

While its own citizens are suffering severe economic hardships, and while innocent Syrian civilians continue to suffer under the barrel bombs and military campaigns of Assad, Putin continues to provide military and tactical support to this murderous regime, attacking schools and hospitals with cluster munitions and incendiary attacks. Further ignoring the basic rights of all people, as Russia sells weapons system to Assad, it refuses to grant asylum or basic humanitarian support to Syrian refugees, who are directly suffering under Russia’s continued involvement in their country.

I remind my colleagues that Putin is no friend to the United States. His brand of leadership is to be condemned in no uncertain terms and should be denounced in this Chamber and by all responsible American Presidential candidates.

He is not a strong leader. He is a ruthless dictator who clearly knows his tradecraft and has not only hacked into the Democratic National Committee’s computer files but has capitalized on whatever business ties Paul Manafort has or had to Russia to woo—seemingly, in effect—an American Presidential candidate who respects strongmen and bravado and effectively recruit him.

There is no room in this Chamber or in the American political landscape for the support of Putin’s actions or leadership. This former KGB agent has a clear purpose in mind. He is engaged in a Soviet Cold War style brand of dictatorial actions, including state-sponsored surveillance, censorship, and repression.

Just look at the record. Human rights groups continue to report that

in 2015, the Kremlin's crackdown on civil society, media, and the Internet took a sinister turn as the government further intensified harassment and persecution of independent critics. Putin's thugs routinely harass anyone and everyone who dares to question Putin's authority.

Earlier this year, a vocal critic was shot dead in front of the Kremlin. According to reports from rights groups, last week Russian police harassed, beat, and threatened environmental activists, and Russian state TV published a smear campaign against these environmentalists, calling them American spies. The real spying—the dangerous activity—comes from Russia itself.

It was July when Russian hackers broke into the email servers of the Democratic National Committee—a clear and blatant attempt to interfere in our domestic political process. We know that Russian actors released tens of thousands of emails with the intention of undermining the Democratic nominee for President, while, amazingly, the Republican nominee seems to encourage it. He encouraged an international adversary—someone he clearly admires for his supposed strength—to hack into the emails in the account of a former American Secretary of State.

This is not normal political campaign behavior. In my view, it is treasonous, and there are no excuses for it. There is no defending it. There is no reasonable explanation or defending it. Every one of my colleagues in this Chamber should condemn it.

Encouraging hacking and government surveillance reeks of authoritarianism that has no place in our democratic society and threatens each and every one of us. It is outrageous that anyone would invite a foreign leader of an adversarial country to undermine or threaten any American, let alone a former Secretary of State and Presidential candidate.

Putin clearly prefers a candidate who is willing to cozy up to dictators, who lavishes praise on the leadership styles of dictators like Saddam Hussein. Someone aspiring to be Commander in Chief, who praises the behavior of leaders who murder their own citizens, jail journalists who dare to question their activities, or consistently take actions to isolate themselves from the international community, in my view, has no business seeking higher office.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask unanimous consent for one additional minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Any praise of Putin for any reason, a Cold War warrior who continues to upend international stability and order, seeking to expand his rule and control, holds false Duma elections in Crimea, stages war games on Crimea's shores—simulating an invasion—clearly must raise a red flag to every American voter.

We must respond to Russia's continued muscle flexing and provocation. I call on the administration for forceful and appropriate responses to Russia's nefarious and calculated involvement in our elections. It is attacking the U.S. political system in a Putin-led cold war 2.0, and it is clear this old KGB spy has no boundaries.

Let's not let ourselves be recruited by him or confuse strength with ruthlessness, as some have. It is my hope that every one of my colleagues will in no uncertain terms condemn any attempt by any nation to influence any American election as well as Russian interventionism and Putin's actions around the world.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I wish to support Ms. Susan Gibson to serve as the next inspector general of the National Reconnaissance Office, NRO, the first to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

In 2013, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which I chaired at the time, included in its Intelligence Authorization Act a provision to require Senate confirmation of the inspectors general for the National Reconnaissance Office and the National Security Agency. Ms. Gibson represents the first nominee to be considered by the Senate for the NRO position.

I had the pleasure to meet Ms. Gibson earlier this year, prior to the Senate Intelligence Committee's open hearing which took place on June 7, 2016, to consider her nomination. I personally appreciated our frank discussion for it demonstrated Ms. Gibson's understanding of the role of the inspector general and the need for principled, objective, and effective oversight of every aspect of the NRO.

With this confirmation, it will be Ms. Gibson's job to ensure that the NRO remains free of waste, fraud, and mismanagement, while supporting efforts to drive the organization toward more efficient and effective operations. I believe that Ms. Gibson possesses the extensive experience and background necessary to carry out this mission.

It is also important that Ms. Gibson recognizes her responsibility to keep the appropriate Members of Congress fully and currently informed about the concerns she may identify at the NRO.

I do not want to sugarcoat it, but this is big job. It is a big job, in part, due to NRO's size and the complexity of its mission. Ms. Gibson will be required to dig deep into some very technical and complicated programs, including some of the most classified and expensive programs.

But it is also a big job because it comes with the extra responsibility of conducting oversight of an organization in which most activities are conducted in secret. The duty to the American public cannot be overstated.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on which I currently serve as vice chairman is charged with ensuring the intelligence community operates in

a manner that is legal, efficient, and abides by the values of the American people. The committee requires effective and independent inspectors general to support us in this task. It is my expectation that Ms. Gibson will make full use of the authorities provided to her as an inspector general.

So, again, congratulations on Ms. Gibson's well-deserved confirmation to this important position, and I want to thank her again on her continued service to the country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, my understanding is that we have 7 minutes left on the Republican side, and I ask unanimous consent to use those 7 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### HEROIN AND PRESCRIPTION DRUG EPIDEMIC

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about this epidemic of heroin, prescription drugs, and now fentanyl and other synthetic heroin. It is devastating our communities. My home State of Ohio, unfortunately, is one of those States that has seen the tragedy of this epidemic unfold. The grip of this addiction has affected every single State in this Chamber, though. People are talking about it more and more in this Chamber because it is affecting every one of us, every community. It knows no ZIP Code. It is in the rural areas, in the suburban areas, and the inner city. No community is safe from it.

Yesterday, I had a coffee—which I do once a week—our Buckeye Coffee, and I had a woman come up to me at the coffee whose name is Sheila. Sheila told me about her son and her daughter-in-law. They had overdosed. They were unconscious. Luckily, she had Narcan—this miracle drug. It is a brand name of naloxone. She was able to bring them back to life.

She then started a group that is all over our State now, which is called Families of Addicts. They are in five different counties. They are focused on the hope of treatment and recovery, but they are also focused on—when Narcan is administered—going to people, intervening with people, getting them into treatment, longer term recovery, and helping them save lives. I so appreciate her and so appreciate these other parents like her who are ensuring that, yes, we save people's lives with Narcan, which is so important, but we also ensure that we are getting people into the treatment they need so they can get back to a productive life and back to their families.

This Chamber passed legislation called the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA, earlier this summer. That legislation is now being implemented by the administration. I hope they accelerate that implementation. They must because the epidemic is so urgent, but, unfortunately,

that legislation, which was written over the last 3½ years, doesn't address one specific issue that I think must be addressed now in the context of what is happening in my State of Ohio and around the country, because it is not just prescription drugs and not just heroin. Increasingly, it is this synthetic heroin called fentanyl or carfentanil and sometimes U-4. This is poison and it is getting into our communities. It is much more powerful than heroin. Ingesting just a few flakes of it can kill a human being.

We have seen huge spikes in overdoses in Ohio over the last couple of months. In my hometown of Cincinnati, we had 174 overdoses in the space of 6 days. Miraculously, most people were saved by Narcan but sometimes having to be administered four or five or six times. The authorities knew it wasn't just heroin, and sure enough, we were able to get a sample of carfentanil to them thinking that might be the problem. They tested it, and sure of enough, many of these overdoses were caused by this synthetic heroin which is 100 times stronger than heroin in some cases. By the way, it is a large animal tranquilizer used for elephants in zoos. Yet these traffickers and pushers are using this drug and not just causing overdoses but causing overdose deaths.

We need new legislation. Last week, we introduced legislation in this Chamber to be able to stop this fentanyl, carfentanil, U-4, and these other synthetic drugs from coming into our communities.

What we were told by the authorities is, the drugs come in by way of the mail system primarily from China and sometimes India. There are chemists in sophisticated laboratories in these countries sending this poison into our community. All we are asking for in our legislation is let's ensure that packages coming from those countries have the information provided so we know where they are coming from, where they are going, and what the contents are. Unbelievably, that is not required now. FedEx, UPS, and other private carriers require it, but our mail system, including our U.S. mail system, does not require it. Talking to law enforcement, including Customs and Border Protection, DEA folks, and the people who are in the trenches dealing with this issue, all agree this legislation makes sense so we can try to stop some of this poison from coming into our communities.

I have been on this floor every single week since our legislation came up back on March 10. I have been talking about the importance of getting legislation passed, and that has now happened. I have been talking about the importance of implementing it quickly, and that is now happening. The Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act was supported by an amazing 92-to-2 vote in this Chamber because every State is affected.

I believe we need to do even more with regard to the specific issue of

these synthetic drugs coming into our country through the mail system. I ask my colleagues to support it—with 92 of us supporting that legislation—and please look at this legislation. Let's support it, get it to the floor, get it to a vote, and let's begin saving more lives as we have to deal with this new wave of synthetic heroin coming into our communities.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Gibson nomination?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE) would have voted "yea".

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE) would each vote yea.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 142 Ex.]

#### YEAS—93

Alexander	Fischer	Murray
Baldwin	Flake	Nelson
Barrasso	Franken	Paul
Bennet	Gardner	Perdue
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Peters
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Booker	Grassley	Reed
Boozman	Hatch	Reid
Brown	Heinrich	Risch
Burr	Heitkamp	Roberts
Cantwell	Heller	Rounds
Capito	Hirono	Rubio
Cardin	Hoeven	Sasse
Carper	Inhofe	Schatz
Casey	Isakson	Schumer
Cassidy	King	Scott
Coats	Kirk	Sessions
Cochran	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Collins	Lankford	Shelby
Coons	Leahy	Stabenow
Corker	Lee	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cotton	Markey	Thune
Crapo	McCain	Tillis
Cruz	McCaskill	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Udall
Donnelly	Menendez	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Enzi	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden

#### NOT VOTING—7

Ayotte	Kaine	Vitter
Boxer	Moran	
Johnson	Sanders	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Alaska.

#### REMEMBERING THE VENERABLE NORMAN H.V. ELLIOTT

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, it seems I am coming to the floor of the Senate on an increasingly frequent basis to honor the pioneering men and women who arrived in the State of Alaska prior to statehood who truly have left a lasting impression on the history of the 49th State.

Today I rise to remember the Venerable Norman H.V. Elliott. Father Elliott was an Episcopal clergyman who arrived in Alaska in 1951. He was truly a profound spiritual force in Alaska from the day he arrived in our State until his death on Friday, September 9 of this year. Father Elliott passed at the age of 97. To say he lived his life to the fullest would be a huge understatement.

Father Elliott lived a life as big as the State of Alaska. As we reflect upon that life, it would be no overstatement to characterize Norman Elliott as a true Alaskan icon.

Father Elliott was born in England. He moved to Detroit, MI, when he was 4 years old, and according to the stories, he decided very early on, about middle-school age, that he wanted to enter the ministry.

That future was somewhat interrupted by World War II. Father Elliott was drawn to military service, and after considering the possibility of joining a Canadian Forces battalion in neighboring Windsor, Ontario, he chose the U.S. Army instead. He was assigned to a new experimental light infantry division which was patterned after a German light division. After training in the swamps of Louisiana and California's mountains, he was deployed to Europe. Initially deployed to France, he fought in Luxembourg and Germany.

I had an opportunity to come to know Father Elliott very well over the years. Several years back, he agreed to sit for an interview as part of our Veterans Spotlight series. This is an oral history project I sponsored to capture the stories of Alaskan veterans. We worked in conjunction with the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. In that interview, Father Elliott talked about the realities of the war. He said: